



Vatican bars gay union blessing, says God 'can't bless sin'

Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The Vatican declared Monday that the Catholic Church won't bless same-sex unions since God "cannot bless sin." The Vatican's orthodoxy office, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a formal response to a question about whether Catholic clergy have the authority to bless gay unions. The answer, contained in a two-page explanation published in seven languages and approved by Pope Francis, was "negative."

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Pope Francis celebrates mass on the occasion of 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines, in St. Peter's Basilica, at the Vatican, Sunday, March 14, 2021.

Associated Press



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VP Harris, Jill Biden hit the road to promote relief plan

By **DARLENE SUPERVILLE, JONATHAN LEMIRE and ZEKE MILLER**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden kicked off the White House's effort to highlight the benefits of his huge COVID relief plan Monday, declaring that "hope is here in real and tangible ways" as his administration began fanning out across the country to promote the new spending. Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and their spouses have begun an ambitious, cross-country tour this week to promote the \$1.9 trillion plan as a way to battle the coronavirus and boost the economy. The road show — dubbed the "Help is here" tour by the White House — began Monday with Harris heading to a COVID-19 vaccination site and a culinary academy in Las Vegas and first lady Jill Biden touring a New Jersey elementary school.

The president will hit the road later in the week — Pennsylvania on Tuesday, Georgia



Vice President Kamala Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff, wave as they board Air Force Two at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., Monday, March 15, 2021, en route to Las Vegas.

Associated Press

with Harris on Friday — but he stayed at the White House on Monday to declare that the bill will help put "shots in arms and money in pockets. That's important."

Hours earlier, Air Force Two lifted off from Joint Base An-

drews and headed west to Nevada, and Harris will also make a stop the following day in Denver to meet with small-business owners. Wednesday sees Jill Biden in Concord, New Hampshire, and Harris' husband, Doug Emhoff, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The stops at vaccination sites, businesses, schools and more are meant to educate the public about different aspects of the giant American Rescue Plan and how the administration says it will help people get to the other side of the coronavirus pandemic.

Biden has said President Barack Obama's administration, in which Biden was vice president, failed to adequately educate the public about the benefits of its economic recovery plan. The president wants to do a better sales job this time around on the details of his first big legislative victory, and he began last week with high-profile speeches, one in prime time, the other from the Rose Gar-

den.

Biden has chosen Gene Sperling, a longtime Democratic economic policy expert, to oversee the massive stimulus package, the role he himself had in 2009's economic rescue package, to lead efforts "to stay on top of every dollar spent."

"I learned from my experience implementing the Recovery Act just how important it is to have someone who can manage all the moving parts with efficiency, speed and integrity and accountability," said the president.

Biden declared on Monday that within the next 10 days, his administration will clear two important benchmarks: distributing 100 million stimulus payments and administering 100 million vaccine doses since he took office.

The plan's key features include direct payments of \$1,400 for most single taxpayers, or \$2,800 for married couples filing jointly, plus \$1,400 per dependent — for

a total of \$5,600 for a married couple with two children. The payments phase out for those with higher incomes.

An extension of federal unemployment benefits will continue through Sept. 6 at \$300 a week. There's \$350 billion for state, local and tribal governments, \$130 billion for K-12 schools and about \$50 billion to expand COVID-19 testing, among other provisions.

Restaurants and bars that were forced to close or limit service can take advantage of a new multibillion-dollar grant program, and the plan also has tens of billions of dollars to help people who have fallen behind on rent and mortgage payments.

The bill cleared Congress without any backing from Republicans, despite polling that found broad public support. Republicans argued the bill was too expensive and included too many provisions not directly linked to the virus.

The "Help is here" tour is taking Harris on her first domestic trip as vice president. Her husband, the nation's first "second gentleman," was breaking off for separate events in Las Vegas on Monday and New Mexico on Wednesday.

Since taking office, Harris has presided over swearing-in ceremonies for members of Biden's Cabinet. She has stood with the president at his speeches, delivered remarks of her own, spoken by telephone with assorted world leaders and made appearances in the Washington area, including at funeral services for Washington power broker Vernon Jordan.

Harris also cast three tie-breaking votes in the 50-50 Senate in her role as president of the Senate. □



In conjunction with the national holiday Himno y Bandera (Day of the National Anthem and Flag), Aruba Today will not be published on Thursday, March 18th, 2021. We will resume our regular printing schedule on Friday, March, 19th, 2021.

Immigrant teens to be housed at Dallas convention center

By **NOMAAN MERCHANT**
and **JAKE BLEIBERG**
Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — The U.S. government plans to house up to 3,000 immigrant teenagers at a convention center in downtown Dallas as it struggles to find space for a surge of migrant children at the border who have strained the immigration system just two months into the Biden administration.

American authorities encountered people crossing the border without legal status more than 100,000 times in February — a level higher than all but four months of Donald Trump's presidency. The spike in traffic poses a challenge to President Joe Biden at a fraught moment with Congress, which is about to take up immigration legislation, and has required the help of the American Red Cross.

The Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center will be used for up to 90 days beginning as early as this week, according to a memo obtained by The Associated Press that was sent Monday to members of the Dallas City Council. Federal agencies will use the facility to house boys ages 15 to 17, according to the memo, which describes the soon-to-open site as a "decompression center." The Health and Human Ser-



In this March 31, 2020 file photo, a leaning sign sits in front of the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in downtown Dallas.

vices Department is rushing to open facilities across the country to house immigrant children who are otherwise being held by the Border Patrol, which is generally supposed to detain children for no more than three days. The Border Patrol is holding children longer because there is next to no space in the HHS system, similar to the last major increase in migration two years ago.

A tent facility operated by the Border Patrol in Donna, some 500 miles (804 kilometers) south of Dallas, is holding more than 1,000 children and teenagers,

some as young as 4. Lawyers who inspect immigrant detention facilities under a court settlement say they interviewed children who reported being held in packed conditions in the tent, with some sleeping on the floor and others not able to shower for five days.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on Saturday directed the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help manage and care for children crossing the border.

"I am incredibly proud of the agents of the Border Patrol, who have been

working around the clock in difficult circumstances to take care of children temporarily in our care," Mayorkas said in a statement. "Yet, as I have said many times, a Border Patrol facility is no place for a child." Asked about housing migrant teens at the convention center, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday that the administration has been looking for additional facilities for unaccompanied children but that she would have to look into the specifics of the arrangement in Dallas.

"Certainly we would ensure

that we're meeting the standard that we have set out," Psaki said.

The growing number of child arrivals comes at politically charged moment, with Congress taking up immigration legislation this week. Biden has delighted pro-immigration advocates by backing a bill to offer a path to citizenship to all of the estimated 11 million people in the U.S. illegally. He also suspended several Trump-era policies to deter asylum, including one that forced them to wait in Mexico for court hearings in the U.S.

Republicans have seized on the numbers to portray a border spinning out of control.

"This crisis is created by the presidential policies of this new administration," House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy said Monday while leading a large congressional delegation to El Paso, Texas. "There's no other way to claim it than a Biden border crisis."

Biden has kept pandemic-related powers in place that allow him to immediately expel people who enter the country without legal status, denying them an opportunity to seek asylum. Biden aides have yet to say when they may lift that authority. It does not extend to children who cross the border alone. □

Man charged with spitting at Disney guard who asked for mask

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — A Florida man spat on a security officer at Walt Disney World after she asked him to put on a mask, according to an arrest report released Monday.

Kelly McKin, 51, of North Palm Beach, Florida, is facing a charge of battery on a uniformed security officer following the encounter last month, the arrest report said.

McKin was outside Disney's Contemporary Resort when Disney World security officer Kristen Goldstein asked him to put on a mask while he was at the property. McKin told her he would

once he was inside the building. When Goldstein told him Disney's policy required masks to be worn at all times, McKin told her to leave him alone and spat on her before walking into the resort, the report said.

The security officer wasn't directly hit, but some saliva did get on her forehead, the report said.

Security cameras caught an image of McKin and a bulletin was issued for him. McKin was stopped the next day after a Disney worker recognized him, according to the report.

Under questioning by a sheriff's deputy, he denied spitting at Goldstein. He

said he had talked with the security officer about the mask policy and promised to put his mask on once he entered the building, and that was the end of their interaction.

"I asked Kelly if he spat on Kristen or if he spat in the general direction of Kristen, and he replied he did not, and was adamant he did not spit on her," Orange County Sheriff's deputy Patrick Strawn wrote in the report.

McKin was told not to return to Disney World. No one on Monday answered a phone number listed for him in the arrest report. □



Two visitors enter Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, Calif., Tuesday, March 9, 2021.

Associated Press



This April 2017, file photo photo shows George Tanios at his sandwich shop in Morgantown, W.Va. Associated Press

2 charged in assault of Capitol officer who died after riot

By **MICHAEL BALSAMO and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. officials have arrested and charged two men with assaulting U.S. Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick with bear spray during the Jan. 6 riot, but they do not know yet whether it caused the officer's death.

George Tanios, 39, of Morgantown, West Virginia, and Julian Khater, 32, of Pennsylvania, were arrested Sunday on an array of charges, including assaulting a federal officer with a dangerous weapon, conspiracy and other offenses. The idea that Sicknick died after being sprayed by a chemical irritant has emerged in recent weeks as a new theory in the case. The arrests are the closest federal prosecutors have come to identifying and charging anyone associated with the deaths that happened during and after the riot. Five people died, including a woman who was shot by a police officer inside the Capitol. But many rioters are facing charges of injuring police officers, who were attacked with bats, sprayed with irritants, punched and kicked, and rammed with metal gates meant to keep the insurrectionists from the Capitol.

Investigators initially believed that Sicknick was hit in the head with a fire extinguisher, based on statements collected early in the investigation, according to two people familiar with the case. But as they've collected more evidence, the theory of the case has evolved and investigators now believe Sicknick may have ingested a chemical substance — possibly bear spray — that may have contributed to his death, officials have said.

Sicknick and other officers were standing guard behind metal bicycle racks as the mob descended on the Capitol on Jan. 6.

"Give me that bear shit," Khater said before he reached into Tanios' backpack, according to court papers. Tanios told Khater "not yet" because it was "still early," but Tanios responded that "they just f---ing sprayed me." Khater was then seen holding a can of chemical spray, prosecutors say.

Khater walked through the crowd toward the bike rack barrier. Rioters began pulling on one of the racks, and Khater was seen with his arm in the air and the canister in his hand while standing just 5-to-8 feet from the officers, authorities said. Video footage shows the officers reacting one by

one — bringing their hands to their face and rushing to find water to flush out their eyes — after they were hit with the spray, according to court papers.

Another officer eventually spotted Khater deploying the substance and sprayed Khater himself, authorities said.

The men each made brief court appearances from jail via videoconference on Monday and will remain locked up pending future hearings. A detention hearing was scheduled for Thursday for Tanios.

An email seeking comment was sent to Tanios' lawyer. A person who answered the phone at the office of Khater's lawyer said they had no comment.

The FBI had obtained video of the incident and released photos of both of the men, but did not indicate in wanted posters that they were being sought in connection with Sicknick's death. A former colleague identified Khater and the FBI received a tip from Tanios' former business partner, who also alleged he embezzled hundreds of thousands of dollars from their business, court papers said.

Tanios operates a greasy spoon called Sandwich U in Morgantown, home of West Virginia University. □



A car involved in a deadly accident sits at the scene Monday, March 15, 2021, in San Diego.

Associated Press

3 die when car hits 9 people in San Diego; driver in custody

By **JULIE WATSON**
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A driver lost control and veered onto a sidewalk Monday in downtown San Diego, killing three people and injuring six others, police said. The driver — whom authorities identified only as a 71-year-old man — was heading through a tunnel underneath a community college campus when he drove his Volvo station wagon up on the sidewalk shortly after 9 a.m., said San Diego Police Chief David Nisleit. The man was arrested on suspicion of driving while impaired.

"For whatever reason, (the driver) veered to the right, went up on the sidewalk, struck multiple pedestrians there and then came back on to the roadway," Nisleit said. He offered "my deepest condolences," to the families of those who died. Three people died at the scene. Five of the six others who were injured were taken to hospitals, including two who were in critical condition, authorities said. On a typical weekday morning it is a busy area with students walking by, but classes have been online during the coronavirus pandemic. There also are a number of homeless tents lining the sidewalks in the area, including the sidewalk in the tunnel.

The deadly crash highlights the inherent risks to the homeless population in California, where the tents

and tarps of homeless people line not only downtown sidewalks but are near ramps where cars accelerate as they enter freeways. More than 150,000 people are homeless statewide. The number has increased during the coronavirus pandemic that has upended the economy.

Nisleit said homeless people may have moved into the tunnel to get out of rain just before the car plowed through.

"I don't know if people were sleeping or people were sitting there," he said. Lisa Brotzman said she was peering out of a window in her tent just as the car swerved to the right shoulder, "spun out of control" and jumped onto the sidewalk in the tunnel where people were waiting out the rain.

"Someone was screaming, 'Ahhh! Ahhhh!'" Brotzman told The San Diego Union-Tribune. "Two or three people were yelling and screaming. It was scary."

"He was cooperative, (and) did not try to run away," the chief said, correcting earlier reports from police that he had tried to flee.

Ambulances, five fire engines, a helicopter and more than 60 first-responders responded to the scene near San Diego City College.

"Our crews found, obviously, a tragic incident under the bridge," said San Diego Fire Department Chief Colin Stowell. □

Police protest response stokes outrage ahead of crime bill

By **DANICA KIRKA**

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Police officers' decision to break up a weekend vigil for a young murder victim abducted on the streets of London has touched off a national debate about the government's power to restrict protests during a public health emergency, as well as during more normal times.

Images of burly officers handcuffing women who gathered Saturday night to demand authorities do more to protect them has fueled anger about heavy-handed policing and raised concerns about plans to expand the government's ability to restrict protests.

"Protest is not a gift, it's a right," said Gracie Bradley, interim director of the human rights group Liberty. "Yes, it can be limited for certain reasons, but those limitations have to be necessary and they have to be proportionate. And what we saw on Saturday was a wholesale failure of the Met to uphold that duty, to facilitate protest and to actually listen to what protesters were saying, which is that we don't feel safe in public space."



People hold up signs during a vigil to reflect on the murder of 33 year old marketing executive, Sarah Everard, in London, Monday, March 15, 2021.

Associated Press

Lawmakers on Monday are considering legislation that would expand the government's ability to curtail noisy and disruptive demonstrations, as part of a sweeping crime bill that also extends sentences for serious violent and sexual offenses and toughens penalties for those convicted of defacing statues.

The government says the laws covering demonstrations need to be changed

in the wake of last year's Extinction Rebellion protests in which environmental campaigners sought to shut down central London.

"There is, and will remain, a balance to be struck between the rights of the protestor and the rights of individuals to go about their daily business," the government says.

"However, there are instances where individuals at a protest behave in a

way that causes unjustifiable disruption or distress to others."

The debate comes after the death of Sarah Everard, a 33-year-old marketing executive whose body was found May 10, a week after she disappeared while walking home. A serving police officer has been charged with her kidnap and murder.

Everard's killing has galvanized women across Britain

to speak out about the barrage of verbal harassment and physical threats they face every day, saying they shouldn't have to live in fear.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday called a meeting of his Crime and Justice Taskforce, including government ministers, senior police officers and prosecutors, to discuss the issue of women's safety. Among the items on the agenda is a recent decline in successful prosecutions for rape and sexual assault. But the opposition Labour Party called on the government to stop talking, toughen penalties for rapists and take action against street harassment and stalking. The party has directed its lawmakers to vote against the crime bill, noting that women aren't mentioned once in its 296 pages.

"This is a missed opportunity to tackle violence against women and girls that has become endemic in the U.K.," David Lammy, Labour's spokesman on justice, said in a statement. Hundreds of women gathered Saturday night on Clapham Common, a park near the place Everard was last seen alive. □

Flights canceled during China's worst sandstorm in a decade

BEIJING (AP) — China's capital and a wide swath of the country's north were enveloped Monday in the worst sandstorm in a decade, forcing the cancellation of hundreds of flights. Skyscrapers in the center of Beijing appeared to

drop from sight amid the dust and sand. Traffic was snarled and more than 400 flights out of the capital's two main airports were canceled amid high winds and low visibility.

The National Meteorological Center said Monday's

storm had developed in the Gobi Desert in the Inner Mongolia Region, where schools had been advised to close and bus service added to reduce residents' exposure to the harsh conditions.

Such storms used to occur regularly in the springtime as sand from western deserts blew eastwards, affecting areas as far as northern Japan. Massive planting of trees and bushes in fragile areas has reduced the effects on other parts of the country in recent years, but the expansion of cities and industries, along with strip mining and overgrazing, has put constant pressure on the environment throughout China.

With its mix of desert and grassy steppe, Inner Mon-

golia is particularly prone to extreme weather resulting from resource exploitation.

Like COVID-19, which is believed to have spread from bats and other wild animals, sandstorms are a reminder of the need to respect nature, said Zhou Jinfeng, secretary general of the conservation group China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation.

"Together with the pandemic, that's another big lesson we should take and we should change our behavior," Zhou said.

The National Meteorological Center forecasted the sand and dust would affect 12 provinces and regions from Xinjiang in the far northwest to Heilongjiang in the northeast and

the eastern coastal port city of Tianjin.

"This is the most intense sandstorm weather our country has seen in 10 years, as well as it covering the broadest area," the center said in a post on its website.

It wasn't clear if the storm was related to a recent general decline in air quality despite efforts to end Beijing's choking smog. The ruling Communist Party has pledged to reduce carbon emissions per unit of economic output by 18% over the next five years.

Environmentalists say China needs to do more to reduce dependency on coal that has made it the world's biggest emitter of climate changing gases. □



Cars are driven along a street amid a sandstorm during the morning rush hour in Beijing, Monday, March 15, 2021.

Associated Press

Vatican bars gay union blessing, says God 'can't bless sin'

Continued from Front

The note distinguished between the church's welcoming and blessing of gay people, which it upheld, but not their unions. It argued that such unions are not part of God's plan and that any sacramental recognition of them could be confused with marriage. The note immediately pleased conservatives, disheartened advocates for LGBT Catholics and threw a wrench in the debate within the German church, which has been at the forefront of opening discussion on hot-button issues such as the church's teaching on homosexuality.

Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, which advocates for greater acceptance of gays in the church, predicted the Vatican position would be ignored, including by some Catholic clergy.

"Catholic people recognize the holiness of the love between committed same-sex couples and recognize this love as divinely inspired and divinely supported and thus meets the standard to be blessed," he said in a statement.

The Vatican holds that gay people must be treated with dignity and respect, but that gay sex is "intrinsically disordered." Catholic teaching says that marriage is a lifelong union between a man and woman, is part of God's plan and is intended for the sake of creating new life.

Since gay unions aren't intended to be part of that plan, they can't be blessed by the church, the document said.

"The presence in such relationships of positive elements, which are in themselves to be valued and appreciated, cannot justify these relationships and render them legitimate objects of an ecclesial blessing, since the positive elements exist within the context of a union not ordered to the Creator's plan," the response said.

God "does not and cannot bless sin: He blesses



In this Oct. 18, 2014 file photo Rome's Mayor Ignazio Marino, center, is flanked by Costanza Tantillo, left, and Monia Di Giuseppe, right, after he registered their gay marriage, in Rome.

Associated Press

sinful man, so that he may recognize that he is part of his plan of love and allow himself to be changed by him," it said.

Francis has endorsed providing gay couples with legal protections in same-sex unions, but that was in reference to the civil sphere, not within the church. Those comments were made during a 2019 interview with a Mexican broadcaster, Televisa, but were censored by the Vatican until they appeared in a documentary last year.

While the documentary fudged the context, Francis was referring to the position he took when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires. At the time, Argentine lawmakers were considering approving gay marriage, which the Catholic Church opposes. Then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio instead supported providing legal protections for gays in stable unions through a so-called "law of civil cohabitation."

Francis told Televisa: "Homosexual people have the right to be in a family. They are children of God."

Speaking of families with gay children, he said: "You can't kick someone out of a family, nor make their life miserable for this. What we have to have is a civil union law; that way they are le-

gally covered."

In the new document and an accompanying unsigned article, the Vatican said questions had been raised about whether the church should bless same-sex unions in a sacramental way in recent years, and after Francis had insisted on the need to better welcome gays in the church.

It was an apparent reference to the German church, where some bishops have been pushing the envelope on issues such as priestly celibacy, contraception and the church's outreach to gay Catholics after coming under pressure by powerful lay Catholic groups demanding change.

In a statement, the head of the German bishops' conference, Bishop Georg Bätzing, said the new document would be incorporated into the German discussion, but he suggested that the case was by no means closed.

"There are no easy answers to questions like these," he said, adding that the German church wasn't only looking at the church's current moral teaching, but also the development of doctrine and the actual reality of Catholics today.

Bill Donohue, president of the conservative Catholic League, praised the de-

cision as a decisive, non-negotiable "end of story" declaration by the Vatican. "The Vatican left nothing on the table. The door has been slammed shut on the gay agenda," Donohue wrote on the League's website, calling the document "the most decisive rejection of those efforts ever written." In the article, the Vatican stressed the "fundamental and decisive distinction" between gay individuals and gay unions, noting that "the negative judgment on the blessing of unions of persons of the same sex does not imply a judgment on persons."

But it explained the rationale for forbidding a blessing of such unions, noting that any union that involves sexual activity outside of marriage cannot be blessed because it is not in a state of grace, or "ordered to both receive and express the good that is pronounced and given by the blessing."

And it added that blessing a same-sex union could give the impression of a sort of sacramental equivalence to marriage. "This would be erroneous and misleading," the article said.

Esteban Paulon, president of the Argentine Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transsexuals, said

the document was proof that for all of Francis' words and gestures expressing outreach to gays, the institutional church wouldn't change.

"Saying that homosexual practice — openly living sexuality — is a sin takes us back 200 years and promotes hate speech that unfortunately in Latin America and Europe is on the rise," Paulon said. "That transforms into injuries and even deaths, or policies which promote discrimination."

A similar note of exasperation was echoed in the Philippines, Asia's largest Roman Catholic nation, where gay rights leader Danton Remoto said it simply wasn't worth it to fight an old institution. "I keep on telling LGBTQs to just have their civil unions done," Remoto said. "We do not need any stress anymore from this church."

Other critical commentators noted the Catholic Book of Blessings contains blessings that can be bestowed on everything from new homes and factories to animals, sporting events, seeds before planting and farm tools. Juan Carlos Cruz, a Chilean survivor of sexual abuse who is gay and close to Francis, said the document was out of step with Francis' pastoral approach and was tone deaf to the needs and rights of LGBT Catholics.

"If the Church and the CDF do not advance with the world ... constantly rejecting and speaking negatively and not putting priorities where they should be, Catholics will continue to flee," he warned.

In 2003, the same Vatican office issued a similar decree saying that the church's respect for gay people "cannot lead in any way to approval of homosexual behavior or to legal recognition of homosexual unions."

Doing so, the Vatican reasoned then, would not only condone "deviant behavior," but create an equivalence to marriage, which the church holds is an indissoluble union between man and woman. □

Aruba its Green Wednesday and Blue Thursday

ORANJESTAD – Tomorrow is St. Patrick's Day. The color that represents this day is green. Thursday is a national holiday and the Day of the National Anthem and Flag, in Papiamentu Dia di Himno y Bandera. This day is marked by the blue color we find in the national flag.

St. Patrick's Day

St Patrick's Day, on March 17, remembers one of Ireland's patron saints, St Patrick. It largely celebrates Irish-American culture in the United States. This day is the traditional death date of Saint Patrick (c. AD 385–461), and although he was not born Irish, he has become an important part of the Irish heritage, mostly through his service across Ireland in the 5th century. Many stories are told in connection with St. Patrick. The three-leaf clover was said to be used by the saintly bishop to explain the Trinity to the pagans, which is why it is such a common St. Patrick's Day symbol today. Another legend has Patrick driving all the snakes out of Ireland; snakes were a popular symbol among the Irish pagans. He is

certainly one of the most revered saints in the Catholic Church.

Day of the National Anthem and Flag

Probably the most popular national holiday on Aruba is the day of the national anthem and flag, Dia di Himno y Bandera. A strong sense of pride is displayed all over as Arubans celebrate their Flag and An-



them Day. Due to the current circumstances with regards to the COVID-19 virus, celebrations are cancelled. However, we do honor our National Anthem and Flag on this day. The Flag of Aruba was officially adopted on March 18th 1976, along with the official anthem "Aruba Dushi Tera" composed by Padu del Caribe, Hubert Booi and Rufo Wever. March 18th was also chosen for the celebration of the national anthem and flag of Aruba because during the round table conference in the Netherlands, on that date in 1948, for the first time a motion was presented to her Majesty Queen Juliana, which called for the self-determination of the Aruban people. □

Ambassadors of Aruba honored at Renaissance Ocean Suites



ORANJESTAD — Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba's loyal and friendly visitors as Goodwill Ambassadors and Emerald Ambassadors of Aruba. The Goodwill Ambassador certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 20 years and more consecutively. The Emerald Ambassador certificate is presented to guests who visit Aruba 35 years and more consecutively.

The Emerald Ambassadors honorees were **Mrs. Heidi Vernic and Mr. James Barry**, who have been coming to Aruba for over 35 years. Also honored was **Mrs. Georgiana Stankiewicz**, who received her Goodwill Ambassador certificate.

The Emerald Ambassador is the highest

certificate that we present, and is given to visitors who have been visiting Aruba 35 years or more consecutively. The ceremony was one of importance to us because we get to honor Aruba's loyal visitors whom have become like family to us.

This lovely group of people stated that they love the island very much, especially for its year-round sunny weather, nice sandy beaches and picturesque sunsets, delicious variety of foods, its cleanliness, and Aruba's warm and friendly people whom became like family to them.

Richardson together with the representatives of the Renaissance Ocean Suites presented the certificates to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □

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Travellers' Choice 2020



Article by Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to high rise Hotels



Aruba in 1951

Episode XCVI - 96

NOORD — It is often said that “Men make history in conditions they didn’t choose.”
This is why the strikes were also present in Aruba’s history.

70 years ago, the new island administration, the Council, had only held the reins for a few weeks, when a serious labor conflict arose on Aruba. On August 1951 an outlaw strike broke out at Lago Oil & Transport Company which assumed impressive proportions, about 3.500 people took part in it, and imposed drastic measures on both; the part of the Insular Government and on that of the Federal Government. The Council had an emergency meeting. Matters even came to such a pass that units of the Royal Dutch Marines had to be dispatched against rioting groups, which, as it turned out, were mainly composed of imported hands. Certain wage demands formed the incitement to this strike.

After some days the parties reached an agreement, but the events of August 1951 caused the right to strike to be restricted. In 1952, the Federal Ordinance Concerning Labor Disputes and the Penal Code of 1946 were modified accordingly. In 1950 relations between management and



laborers at Lago had been canalized by an agreement to be renewed every year between the management and the Lago Employee Council. In 1955, 800 members of the Petroleum Workers' Federation of Aruba demanded a referendum as to the desirability of dissolving this Employee Council. This referendum was taken and its results were in favor of a continuance of the Council, which accordingly remained the laborers' representative body. At the request of the Petroleum Workers Federation of Aruba another referendum about the same matter was held in May 1957, again showing a preference for the continuation of the Employee Council. The Federal Government in February 1961 invited the legal expert J.A.Berger, to come over to our island in order to reconcile the disputing parties.

Before the end of 1951, the Island Council had come together many times in order to deliberate upon matters coming within their jurisdiction under the new administrative system: the organization of an efficient administration for independent Aruba; the drawing up of standing orders for the Council; the election of deputies, the delineation of the tasks of the island departments, etc. At first the Island Council did not conceive its duties to be of a political nature.

In January 1954, when the so-called Small Committee of the Round Table Conference were having discussions at Willemstad, the Aruba Island Council passed a motion tending toward the recognition of Aruba as a completely independent

territory within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This motion caused the central government to institute a committee, presided over by N. Debrot, regarding the wishes of the Aruban population. Law expert Prof. R.Kranenburg gave his advice in the matter, which turned out to be unfavorable. The Netherlands constitution recognized only three parts of the realm and the Dutch government did not want a modification of the constitution. Reasons and intentions to change the Aruban political mindset through division were executed by a successive Executive Councils, diverting the course of things. Aruba's economic prosperity continued growing. In 1985, a Status Aparte deal was signed with the new partners of The Dutch Kingdom. Knowing that reforms are imminent in what concerns transparency and islands sustainability; Arubans again are confronted with hard decisions and tough challenges of existence. By now they must know that the best way to overcome storms is the way they know best: one Nation and one Culture. □

To get to know a little more regarding Aruba's and its cultural origins we highly recommend you to book your participation in our cultural encounter session.

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Papillon: the butterfly effect of magnificent food



PALM BEACH — Do you remember the film "Papillon" starring Steve McQueen? Papillon restaurant is the island's example where 'life imitates art.' The décor, especially the restrooms, was inspired by the movie. For more than a decade this restaurant has built a reputation with the fusion of classic French cuisine, Dutch and Caribbean flavors. Welcome in the world of wonders where ambiance, taste and service come together and you feel you are being welcomed in the home of the owner and her team.

"We find it really important that our guests have fun; can relax while listening to live music while their taste buds are being tickled by France, The Netherlands and the Caribbean. We offer a unique fusion of dishes and a night not to forget," says owner Tina. She points out that all Covid-protocol is in place here, they are very keen on hygiene and offer outside dining on a cozy, elegant terrace with social distancing in place and right on the high-rise strip.

Oysters, caviar and wild boar

You are on vacation, life is to enjoy! If you want something special, a different flow than the



usual then Papillon is the place to go. Foodies are in heaven here with classic French dishes such as Foie Gras, Frog Legs, fresh Oysters coming in on a weekly basis with KLM, Escargots, Dover Sole à la Meunière flown in from Europe and filleted at the table, Duck Breast seared on the skin, roasted and braised Lamb in Balashi beer and slow braised Wild Boar Shank. Do not leave without trying the exclusive recommendation: Caviar! All of this combined with an extensive wine list from around the world makes Papillon a must-do on your Aruban vacation.

Tina: "Our chef is from Peru and at the moment we have the renowned guest chef Griet Vanbrabant who worked in Michelin star restaurants like El Bulli in Spain which happened to be the world's best restaurant for many years and Pujol in Mexico. So this is the time to come over and reserve your table."

Let the music play!

On Monday's and Friday's enjoy the tunes of the famous performer Marisela who will enchant you with her acoustic performance accompanied by percussion only. On Thursday's and Saturday's sax player Jairo will accompany you with some relaxing tunes. The musicians interact with the guests, requests can be send in, the live tunes definitely add to the experience. Sit back, relax, listen and sing along to your favorite tunes.

Vegetarian vibes present

Impressive vegetarian/vegan dishes are set up especially for the guests by the chef and Meredith from Vegan Aruba. "We offer vegan choices that are really good and tasty. Our daily soup is always vegan too." What are you waiting for, make sure to pay a visit to this elegant yet laid-



back restaurant while on Aruba. You are most welcome!

Papillon Restaurant is located at The Village across the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino and within walking distance of all other major hotels.

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Open Daily: 5pm – 10.00PM

For all menus and specials visit the website:

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Papillon
RESTAURANT

Elements Restaurant Present Aruba's only Authentic Aruban & Caribbean Buffet A feast of traditional Aruban and Caribbean flavors and ingredients overlooking one of the most spectacular beaches in the world



EAGLE BEACH — Elements Restaurant, located at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, proudly reveals its Authentic Aruban & Caribbean Buffet, available every Monday through Saturday from 12:30 PM to 3:00 PM for \$24.50 per person. On Sundays the restaurant continues with its famous Sunday Brunch.

"We wanted to create an authentic Aruban menu that, with each bite, will take you back-in-time to your childhood home. We want you to relive the nostalgic flavors of the stews and desserts your parents and grandparents prepared. For our international customers, we want them to enjoy a traditional and culturally enrich dining experience." Ewald Biemans, owner/CEO of Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, explains.

Executive Chef Marc Giesbers, Director of Food and Beverage, and his team of local & Caribbean chefs have been working hard and testing out different dishes to reimagine your lunch dining experience. The rotating menu has everything from local cornbread to polenta sticks, plantains, corn patties, Aruban ceviche, seafood salad, sulz, pickled pork, blood sausage, cucumber or papaya stoba, beef or chicken stews, fish or chicken soup, jerk chicken, Caribbean seafood paella, a pasta station, and a dessert tasting of flan, cashew cake, local fruit cake, and much more! "Our team is incredibly diverse, and our buffet assortment highlights this. Besides our traditional local dishes made by our Aruban chefs and cooks, we also offer various Caribbean dishes created by our Jamaican, Dominican, Haitian, Colombian, and Venezuelan chefs and cooks. Each chef or cook concentrates on making an authentic dish from their region, highlighting the delightful palettes they remember from infancy." Chef Marc explains. "It is also important to us to support our local farmers as much as possible. Our assortment rotates to include ingredients that are in season, and we source as much as we can locally or from nearby regions." The award-winning and adults-only beachfront restaurant will also continue to offer their regular a-la-carte menus, which cater to all dietary needs, including vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free diets.

Don't forget that the restaurant also offers its ultra romantic private dinners for two in one of their famous beach cabanas. Guests can enjoy their meal and a Caribbean cocktail or mocktail overlooking the spectacular Eagle Beach on Elements' outdoor seating deck. Reservations are recommended and be mindful that the restaurant does not seat groups larger than six persons and does not take cash (all major credit and debit cards are accepted).

For reservations, please visit www.elementsaruba.com or call +297 583 1100.



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What to do if you are a victim of unemployment fraud

By **SARAH SKIDMORE SELL**
AP Personal Finance Writer

Unemployment fraud in the U.S. has reached dramatic levels during the pandemic — the Labor Department inspector general's office estimates that more than \$63 billion has been paid out improperly through fraud or errors since March 2020.

Criminals are seizing on the opportunity created by the pandemic. Using data stolen from prior data breaches, the criminal makes a claim using someone else's identity to access an increased pool of benefits. About \$550 billion was spent in support of those out of work in 2020, compared with an average of \$32 billion in the previous five years. States, often overwhelmed with claims, navigating new rules and using outdated systems, have struggled to keep up. The problem cuts deep for victims, who can face delays getting their legitimate benefits, are at risk for further fraud and are left to resolve much of the problem themselves.

Experts say everyone should be on alert. Here's what you should know about how to spot unemployment fraud, protect yourself and what to do if you are a victim.

THE SIGNS



In this May 7, 2020, file photo, the entrance to the Labor Department is seen near the Capitol in Washington.

Unfortunately, most people do not know they are a victim until the damage is done.

People typically find out about the problem when they receive benefits-related paperwork in the mail, a call from their employer or when they try to file a legitimate claim for benefits and are denied. In some cases, a criminal may initiate the false claim but the money itself is sent to the victim's account or home. The fraudsters may also

build on a legitimate claim by requesting further benefits and nabbing those.

Unfortunately, the fraud may have been perpetrated months ago but some people may just be finding out now because of tax season. States are required to mail out a 1099-G form, which reports income from unemployment benefits. People may receive these for benefits they never claimed, sometimes from multiple states. A taxpayer may also discover the issue

after they file their federal taxes, only to be alerted later by the IRS that they did not report all their income, due to the bogus claim. "We are nowhere near the end of this particular fraud," said Eva Velasquez, president and CEO of the Identity Theft Resource Center, a nonprofit that helps victims of identity theft. Anyone can be a victim, Velasquez said. Retired individuals may find out they are a victim when the Social Security Administra-

tion alerts them their benefits are being reduced.

Some homeowners have even found their address tied up in a scam after they put their home up for sale. The ITRC said criminals are applying for unemployment benefits using the addresses of homes that are being sold. Once approved, the state unknowingly issues benefits to the fraudsters. The thieves get the money electronically, or they try to retrieving the benefit cards from the mail at the "for sale" house by contacting the new homeowner, or even a postal worker, to request the mail be forwarded to the thief.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Velasquez urges everyone to be alert to any suspicious mail, phone calls, email or social media requests. These could be attempts to gather personal information or a sign of existing fraud. Visa describes a few warning signs: offers from people or organizations you don't recognize promising earlier and faster unemployment benefits; solicitations from people you don't know offering money in exchange for personal information; and letters or email correspondence indicating new accounts or unemployment insurance benefits have been initiated in your name. □

Associated Press

U.S. air travel rises to highest levels yet since pandemic hit

By **DAVID KOENIG**
AP Airlines Writer

The number of people flying in the United States has eclipsed the year-ago level for the first time in the pan-

demic period, although travel remains deeply depressed from 2019.

The Transportation Security Administration said 1.34 million people passed

through U.S. airport checkpoints on Sunday, topping the 1.26 million people that TSA screened on the comparable Sunday a year ago.

It marked the fourth straight day that TSA saw more than 1 million people pass through its checkpoints — Friday was a new peak, nearly 1.36 million. The seven-day moving average of TSA traffic hit its highest level since March 2020, when travel was collapsing as COVID-19 spread rapidly. However, Sunday's screenings were still 45% lower than on the comparable day in 2019, and screenings in March are running

53% lower than the same period two years ago.

Several airlines report that after dismal sales in January and February, more people have bought tickets to travel in spring or summer as infection rates decline and more people get vaccinated against COVID-19 — about 70 million Americans have received at least one dose and 37 million have completed their vaccination, according to government figures. Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian said Monday that bookings began picking up five or six weeks ago. Since the pandemic hit, air travel has picked up a

few times mostly around holidays only to drop back down. This time, the recovery "seems like it's real," Bastian said on a J.P. Morgan investor conference. United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby said his airline will generate "core" cash instead of burning cash for March, and he expects the positive trend to continue in the months ahead. Southwest Airlines said said revenue for March and April will be better than expected as passenger traffic and fares rise. The airline said people are booking leisure trips to beach and mountain destinations but business travel is still lagging. □



In this Tuesday, March 9, 2021 file photo, travelers walk through the Salt Lake City International Airport, in Salt Lake City.

Associated Press

Wild population of endangered Mexican wolves keeps growing

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN

Associated Press
ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP)

— Once on the verge of extinction, the rarest subspecies of the gray wolf in North America has seen its population nearly double over the last five years, with more gains being reported in 2020, U.S. wildlife managers said Friday.

The results of the latest annual survey show there are at least 186 Mexican gray wolves in the wild in New Mexico and Arizona. That marks the fifth straight year that the endangered species has increased its numbers, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Reintroduction of Mexican wolves to the American Southwest began more than two decades ago. The program has pitted environmentalists, rural residents and wildlife managers against one another, prompting many legal challenges over management of the effort. The latest pending case involves a rewrite of the agency's management plan for the animals.



This May 20, 2019, file photo shows a Mexican gray wolf in Eurkea, Mo.

Some of details of the survey done over the winter were included in court filings made this week.

Environmentalists said they were hopeful about the numbers but that the wolves were still in a precarious position.

Bryan Bird, director of the Southwest program for Defenders of Wildlife, said ensuring that wolves and

people can coexist will continue to be an essential part of long-term success for the species' recovery. He said he was hopeful the federal government would make wolf recovery more of a priority.

"So, while it is encouraging to see an increase in wolves, limited genetic diversity and high rates of illegal killing continue to slow

recovery efforts," he said. "There is still work to be done to establish a self-sustaining Mexican gray wolf population." Michael Robinson of the Center for Biological Diversity said more stringent protections are needed for the wolves and more effective releases from captivity into the wild. Meanwhile, ranchers and rural residents who live in

the mountainous regions of southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico where the wolves roam say livestock deaths due to predation continue to escalate as the population grows. Unlike wolf reintroductions in Yellowstone and the northern United States, wildlife managers in the Southwest are faced with a climate that has encouraged a year-round calving season, meaning conflicts between livestock and wolves are constant rather than just a few months out of the year.

Ranchers contend the wolves are becoming more brazen despite efforts to scare them away using range riders on horseback or flagging along fence lines. The wolf recovery team also uses feeding caches to draw wolves away from cattle.

According to the latest survey, there were 114 wolves in New Mexico and 72 in Arizona, marking a 14% increase from the previous year. In 2019, the wolf recovery team documented a population increase of nearly 25%. □

Review: Take a ride into the greatest frontier in science

By JEFF ROWE

Walter Isaacson did a masterful job on his biography of Steve Jobs, a hard-to-like character who revolutionized six industries – personal computers, phones, music, animated movies, tablet computing and

digital publishing. In "Code Breaker," Isaacson's central character is the much more likable biochemistry researcher and Nobel Prize winner, Jennifer Doudna, but the science is a tougher subject for the ordinary person to embrace.

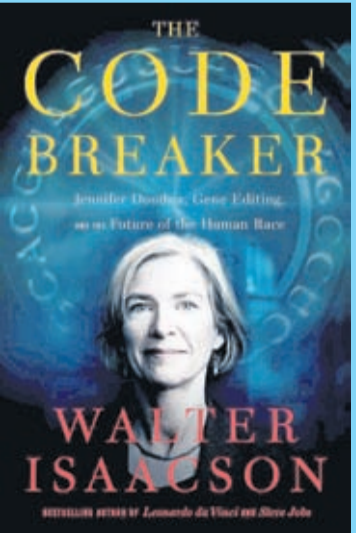
Prerequisites almost are required – biology 101 and chemistry 101 would be helpful in grasping the roles of introns and cryocooling crystals, as examples.

Star of the book is CRISPR – Clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats – the ability of scientists to modify genes which then can allow them to, for example, repair defective genetic disorders such as cystic fibrosis.

And at 512 pages, Code Breaker is a hefty reading-time investment with big doses of science. A tough read at times with textbook-like digressions into the supporting science. Isaacson conveys all this though with unflagging enthusiasm, as if he can barely restrain himself from turning into a scientist himself.

The ramifications of Doud-

na and her colleagues' work is wondrous, scary and a testimony to the scientific expertise at our universities and research institutions.



This cover image released by Simon & Schuster shows "The Code Breaker: Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing and the Future of the Human Race," by Walter Isaacson.

Associated Press

In those research labs, Doudna and her colleagues are developing some of the pivotal breakthroughs in human history, providing the prospect of giving humans the ability to eliminate the threat of many diseases by modifying those genetic strands. Imagine how different our global experience might have been this past year if we had the ability to adapt our immune systems to resist COVID-19.

From there, it's a short step to creating designer humans. Want a tall child with brown eyes and dark hair? That ability raises moral and ethical concerns humans have not yet faced. The electronics revolution has changed everything about how we live, now the life-sciences revolution offers the ability to change life itself. □

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

1				4				9
			9		2			
	3			7			6	
	5		3		7		4	
7		9		1		8		3
	8		5		6		2	
	2			6			1	
			1		3			
3				2				7

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Jennifer Garner invites families to have a ‘Yes Day’

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP Film Writer

Jennifer Garner didn't come up with the concept of a Yes Day. But when she and her middle daughter discovered Amy Krouse Rosenthal's book about a crazy 24 hours where parents have to say yes to their children's demands almost a decade ago, they were hooked. It became a beloved and exhausting annual tradition in the household. Then a few years ago a producer friend saw one of her Yes Day "morning after" photos on Instagram and had a revelation: This should be a movie.

"Yes Day," which debuts on Netflix Friday, stars Garner and Edgar Ramirez as the parents to three spirited kids, a young teenager played by Jenna Ortega and two littler ones, played by Julian Lerner and Everly Carganilla. It's the first film Garner has produced in 10 years. "I just went into kind of a kid mode for a really long time," Garner said. "This the first thing I've ever developed from scratch. Because of that, the stories in it are really personal."

During the virtual premiere, she said, her kids kept laughing at how many



Director Miguel Arteta, standing center, appears on the set of his film "Yes Day" with actors Jennifer Garner, seated left, and Edgar Ramirez.

things had been inspired by their own Yes Days. For Yes Day curious parents, Garner said the asks are never too crazy, mostly ice cream for breakfast and sleeping outside and whatnot. Just be forewarned, the next day you might look a little "haggard," according to Garner.

"You feel like you were out partying, but really you're just hungover from being so tired," Garner said.

"I love Jen so much. She brings out the most optimistic and best part of me," Arteta said. "And how can you say no to a movie called 'Yes Day'?"

Arteta was the one who actually suggested that her character's husband be of Latino descent and that their kids be biracial to more reflect a modern family. She loved the idea. He suggested Ramirez, who had never done a com-

edy before, but Arteta had seen sparks of comedic genius in his performance in "Joy" and thought it was worth a shot.

Ramirez had never even met Garner before, but they both immediately clicked and thought, "Where have you been all my life?" He also brought a lot of positive energy to the sometimes chaotic (in a good way) set and was just delighted to be doing

something different.

"I love comedy as a vehicle to talk about greater subjects that are happening in society," Ramirez said. "I am so grateful to Jen and Miguel because this is a reflection of the world we live in. In a great multi-cultural city like Los Angeles and a state like California, these are the families that you see around every day. It's important to see that on screen." "Yes Day" is full of very physical hijinks, from an epic water balloon fight (which took five days to film and over 30,000 balloons) to an ice cream eating contest (during which over 40 gallons were consumed), that sometimes required stunt doubles. Garner even brought on stunt coordinator Shauna Duggins, who she's been working with since the first season of "Alias," to assist. But it's also about the parents.

"It's difficult to find something that's really fun and engaging for everyone from, you know, my 15-year-old down to a little kid. And you want it to be fun to watch but you have to speak to the parents as well," Garner said. "That is what I'm so proud of about this movie." □

Associated Press

After top Grammy win, singer H.E.R. is heading to the Oscars

By MESFIN FEKADU
AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A night after winning the top Grammy Award for songwriting, R&B singer H.E.R. and her collaborators Tiara Thomas and D'Mile have become Oscar-nominated songwriters.

H.E.R.'s protest anthem "I Can't Breathe" won song of the year at Sunday's Grammys, and another soulful song with poignant lyrics by the singer — "Fight for You" from "Judas and the Black Messiah" — is nominated for best original song at the 2021 Academy Awards.

H.E.R. wrote both tracks with D'Mile — the uber-talented producer who has created songs for everyone from Janet Jack-



H.E.R. poses in the press room with the award for song of the year for "I Can't Breathe" and best R&B song at the 63rd annual Grammy Awards at the Los Angeles Convention Center on Sunday, March 14, 2021.

Associated Press

son and Bruno Mars to Beyoncé and Jay-Z — and Thomas, a singer who has had success with her own music and has written

other songs with H.E.R. like "Avenue" and the double-platinum hit "Slide." Leslie Odom Jr. will also compete for best original

song with "Speak Now" from "One Night in Miami..." which he wrote with Sam Ashworth.

The Tony and Grammy winner is a double Oscar nominee this year, also earning a nomination for best supporting actor, and his success mirrors achievements made by Mary J. Blige, Lady Gaga and Cynthia Erivo — performers who earned both acting and music nominations in the same year.

Diane Warren is vying for her 12th Oscar nomination with "Io Sì (Seen)" from "The Life Ahead (La Vita Davanti a Se)," which won her a second best original song Golden Globe last month. She shares the nomination with Laura Pausini.

"The latter track was writ-

ten by Grammy-nominated songwriter-producer Savan Kotecha, who works closely with pop music maestro Max Martin and has crafted hits for Ariana Grande, The Weeknd, Ellie Goulding and more pop stars. Kotecha shares his nomination with Fat Max Gsus and Rickard Göransson. □

1	7	8	6	4	5	2	3	9
5	4	6	9	3	2	1	7	8
9	3	2	8	7	1	5	6	4
2	5	1	3	8	7	9	4	6
7	6	9	2	1	4	8	5	3
4	8	3	5	9	6	7	2	1
8	2	4	7	6	9	3	1	5
6	9	7	1	5	3	4	8	2
3	1	5	4	2	8	6	9	7

Difficulty Level ★★

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Dallas Seavey wins Iditarod, matches most wins by a musher

By MARK THIESSEN
Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP)

— Dallas Seavey on Monday won the pandemic-shortened Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, matching the most wins ever by a musher. Seavey brought his 10 dogs across the finish line near the community of Willow, Alaska, more than three hours ahead of the second place musher, Aaron Burmeister.

It was the fifth title for Seavey, who matched the five-win threshold that only one other musher has accomplished. Rick Swenson won his five titles between 1977 and 1991.

"It's a big deal," Seavey said at the finish line after a race official checked to make sure his sled was complete with a sleeping bag, axe, dog booties and other mandatory gear. His finish was televised statewide.

Seavey said he didn't allow himself to think about a fifth

win while on the trail because he didn't want to jinx it. "That's huge, man," he said. "I looked up to the Iditarod champions my whole life and I've dreamed about this my whole life. And now to actually go from that, to see it happen, to realize that, that's pretty cool."

Seavey said he tries to give himself a little time after each win to revel in it, but then it's time to focus on the next thing, whatever it is.

"Whatever you're doing, give it your whole attention and we'll dwell on the records or the numbers when we're too old to keep doing it. That's the time to look back at it," he said. "But right now, I want to keep moving."

Burmeister, a Nome native running in his 20th Iditarod, had his highest ever finish with second place. He's now had seven top 10 finishes since 2009.

"It wasn't quite good

enough," Burmeister said at the finish line. "It didn't come together in the end, but it was an incredible race."

It's also a triumphant return for Seavey. At age 34, many believe he could one day become the Iditarod's greatest champion. His official winning time was 7 days, 14 hours, 8 minutes and 57 seconds.

Seavey previously won four titles in a five-year span, starting in 2012. He last raced in 2017 after Iditarod officials said four of his dogs tested positive for a banned opioid painkiller.

At the time, he vehemently denied giving his dogs any painkillers. A year later, the Iditarod reversed course and cleared Seavey of any wrongdoing. This year's Iditarod had a route change and was shortened to about 850 miles (1,368 kilometers) because of the pandemic.

The Iditarod began March 7 with 46 mushers who by-



Dallas Seavey poses with his dogs after winning the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race near Willow, Alaska, early Monday, March 15, 2021.


Associated Press


passed most rural Alaska villages that normally serve as checkpoints as a COVID-19 safety precaution, leaving the competitors to sleep in tent camps outside towns or under the stars in temperatures that have reached minus 55 degrees (minus 48 C).

Since then, nine quit the race, including fan favorite Aliy Zirkle, who was injured in a fall in what she has

said would be her last race. Another musher, Gunnar Johnson, was withdrawn after he tested for positive for COVID-19, leaving 36 teams in the race.


Mushers started the race near Willow, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Anchorage. From there, they traveled to the ghost town of Iditarod and then turned back around to finish in Willow. □





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Thomas battles through personal turmoil and a tough Sawgrass

By **DOUG FERGUSON**
AP Golf Writer

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Justin Thomas

was 16 years old when he made his PGA Tour debut with a 65 in the Wyndham Championship, the start of a career that has been filled with big moments and very little trouble.

The son and grandson of PGA professionals, he won the PGA Championship for his first major at 24. He reached No. 1 in the world. He won a FedEx Cup title. He had blue-chip sponsors. And he ended last year playing with his father, Mike, as they won the PNC Championship.

A new year of hope brought turmoil he never imagined and a test unlike anything he ever found on a golf course. "I've had stuff happen in my life I never thought I'd have happen," Thomas said Sunday evening after he added another big moment to a young career already filled with them by winning The Players Championship.

"I had to figure it out and



Justin Thomas holds the trophy after winning The Players Championship golf tournament Sunday, March 14, 2021, in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.

had to get over it," he said. "If I wanted to throw a pity party for myself or feel sorry for myself, there's no reason to show up, and I can stay home until I feel like I'm ready. ... It tested me mentally, physically, emotionally. And I'm very proud of myself for getting it done."

He got it done in a big way. Coming off two missed cuts in four starts since his world felt like it was crashing in around him, Thomas was outside the cut line with nine holes to play on Friday when he made four birdies. From there, he matched the lowest final 36-hole

score (64-68) at the treacherous TPC Sawgrass for a one-shot victory over Lee Westwood.

The ball striking was so sublime that Thomas, who rallied from three shots behind with a 4-under 68, was on the verge of becoming the first winner to hit every

green in the final round. He hit the fringe on the final hole. Thomas choked up thinking about his grandfather, Paul, who died last month. Mike Thomas broke down thinking about the toll the last few months have taken on him and his son.

"I told him today when it was over that looked like a round of the old Justin Thomas," the father said.

Winning doesn't take care of everything, but it doesn't hurt. Thomas needed this one, and he found the right time to deliver a performance that, except for a pair of three-putt bogeys, was close to flawless.

He was in contention at Kapalua on the weekend when he missed a short par putt and muttered an anti-gay slur under his breath that was barely audible on the hot mic and much louder on social media. After two days of owning the mistake and apologizing in interviews, his clothing sponsor dropped him. Another one publicly reprimanded him. □

Associated Press

Medvedev 1st man other than 'Big 4' in ATP Top 2 since 2005



Russia's Daniil Medvedev throws his arms in the air after losing against Serbia's Dusan Lajovic in their first round men's singles match of the ABN AMRO world tennis tournament at Ahoy Arena in Rotterdam, Netherlands, Wednesday, March 3, 2021.

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Daniil Medvedev rose to a career-best No. 2 in the ATP rankings on Monday, making him the first man other than Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer or Andy Murray to hold either of the top two spots in 15 1/2 years.

Lleyton Hewitt was the last man outside of that quartet to sit at No. 1 or No. 2. He ranked second in July 2005, behind Federer.

Medvedev rose from No. 3 to swap places with Nadal a day after winning the Open 13 tournament in Marseille, France, for his 10th career title.

Since Hewitt's most recent stay at No. 2, that spot has been

held for 368 weeks by Nadal, 203 by Federer, 144 by Djokovic and 41 by Murray.

Djokovic is currently in his 312th career week at No. 1; he recently broke Federer's record of 310 total weeks in the top spot.

Medvedev twice has been the runner-up at a Grand Slam tournament, losing to Djokovic in the final of the Australian Open last month and to Nadal in the final of the 2019 U.S. Open.

The 25-year-old from Russia is now 14-2 in 2021 and has won 23 of his last 25 matches, including the last three tournaments he entered last season. □